

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS, US

SUBJECT: ALLON VISIT--ALLON'S DOMESTIC POSITION

BEGIN SUMMARY: DOMINANT ROLE OF RABIN AND LABOR PARTY FACTIONAL-ISM COMBINE TO CIRCUMSCRIBE ALLON'S INFLUENCE IN FORMATION OF ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY. HIS CONTINUING ADVOCACY OF A MORE FLEXIBLE AND POSITIVE APPROACH TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE (THE LATEST VERSION IS PROPOSAL FOR INFORMAL TALKS WITH JORDAN AND WEST BANK PALESTINIANS) HAS PLACED HIM IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE LABOR ALIGNMENT MODERATES, BUT SO FAR HE HAS AVOIDED A CONFRONTATION IN CABINET WITH RABIN. ALTHOUGH URGING A CABINET DEBATE AT AN EARLY DATE TO RECONSIDER GOI POLICY, ALLON IS UNLIKELY TO PUSH HIS VIEWS SO HARD AS TO PROVOKE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

1. ALLON AS FOREIGN MINISTER. RABIN'S APPOINTMENT OF YIGAL ALLON AS FOREIGN MINISTER IN MAY 1974 REPRESENTED THE HIGH POINT OF ALLON'S LENGTHY CAREER IN ISRAELI PUBLIC LIFE. A YEAR AND A HALF LATER, HOWEVER, ALLON MUST BE SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED WITH HIS ROLE. WHILE ALLON HAS THE TITLE, RABIN IN MANY RESPECTS, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS THE CRUCIAL AREA OF U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS AND THE KEY DECISIONS ON ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS, IS HIS OWN FOREIGN MINISTER. SIMILARLY, ALLON ACQUIRED CONSIDERABLE STATUS AS THE "MODERATE" IN THE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING TRIO WHICH NEGOTIATED

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HIS MODERATION HIS WAS NOT THE DECISIVE VOICE. BOTH IN MARCH AND AGAIN IN AUGUST PERES WAS THE ONE WHOSE SUPPORT FOR OR OPPOSITION TO SPECIFIC PROPOSALS DIRECTED THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS.

2. THE RABIN-ALLON RELATIONSHIP. ALLON SEEMS TO BE RECONCILED TO KEY ROLE OF RABIN IN THE FORMATION OF ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY. THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT HE IS CONSIDERING RESIGNATION AS A RESULT OF THEIR DIFFERENCES ON THE PALESTINIAN OR OTHER ISSUES. THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT OF THE JOB FOR ALLON IS IN THE AREA OF U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS. ON THE ONE HAND, HE HAS BEEN ONE OF THE STRONGEST PUBLIC DEFENDERS OF U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY (EXCEPT FOR OUR VOTE ON NOVEMBER 30 IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL), MINIMIZING THE DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS AND RESPONDING VIGOROUSLY TO ATTACKS BY THE OPPOSITION ON U.S. RELIABILITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, RABIN HAS LEFT NO DOUBT THAT HE REGARDS US/ISRAELI RELATIONS AS HIS PERSONAL BAILIWICK.

3. ALLON AND THE LABOR ALIGNMENT. ALLON'S CURRENT POSITION AS A MAJOR BUT NOT DOMINANT NATIONAL LEADER IS IN MANY RESPECTS AN EXTENSION OF HIS ENTIRE POLITICAL HISTORY. HE WAS ONE OF THE HEROES IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE WHEN HE HEADED THE ELITIST PALMACH, BUT IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER HAD A FALLING OUT WITH BEN-GURION. DESPITE AUSPICIOUS BEGINNINGS, FROM THEN UNTIL 1973 HE WAS UNABLE TO REACH ANY OF THE THREE KEY MINISTRIES. ON THE EVE OF THE SIX DAY WAR, FOR INSTANCE, ESHKOL TURNED TO DAYAN (WHO WAS IN THE OPPOSITION AT THE TIME) AND NOT TO ALLON TO BECOME DEFENSE MINISTER.

4. AS THE HEAD OF THE AHDUT AVODAH FACTION WHICH CONTROLS TWO MINISTRIES AND EIGHT KNESSET SEATS, ALLON TODAY ONLY HAS LIMITED INFLUENCE WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY. BUT HE IS REGARDED AS THE POTENTIAL LEADER OF THE MODERATE CAMP IN THE LARGER SENSE. THE ALLON PLAN, WHICH HE FORMULATED AFTER THE 1967 WAR, IS STILL REGARDED BY MANY LABOR ALIGNMENT MODERATES AS THE RALLYING POINT FOR THOSE WHO FAVOR A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE ON THE WEST BANK.

5. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE UNGA'S ADOPTION OF PRO-PLO AND ANTI-ISRAELI RESOLUTIONS AND THE SYRIAN/SOVIET/PLO DIPLOMATIC CONFIDENTIAL

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OFFENSIVE, ALLON INDICATED THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO COME OUT WITH A NEW INITIATIVE ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. INDEED, APPEARING ON ISRAELI TELEVISION DECEMBER 9, HE CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD PROPOSED A FULL-FLEDGED CABINET DEBATE ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AT AN EARLY DATE. AT THE LABOR ALIGNMENT FACTION MEETING THE SAME DAY HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SEBASTIA SETTLEMENT COMPROMISE AND PUBLICLY BLAMED HIMSELF FOR NOT HAVING SPOKEN OUT MORE FORCEFULLY ON THIS

AND A NUMBER OF OTHER ISSUES. ON EVE OF HIS VISIT, THERE ARE AGAIN FRESH REPORTS THAT HE WILL RAISE IN CABINET IDEA OF "INFORMAL TALKS" WITH JORDAN AND WEST BANK PALESTINIANS (SEPTTEL).

6. RECENT SETBACKS. THE LAST MONTH HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT FOR ALLON. HE WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY (IN LONDON) WHEN THE CABINET FORMULATED ITS STAND ON THE JANUARY 12 UNSC DEBATE AND DECIDED TO AUTHORIZE FOUR NEW GOLAN HEIGHTS SETTLEMENTS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE KEPT THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI PARTICIPATION IN THE JANUARY 12 DEBATE OPEN AND THAT HE HAD SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING NEW SETTLEMENTS. SUBSEQUENTLY, RABIN NARROWLY RESTRICTED THE MANDATE FOR ALLON'S WASHINGTON TALKS TO THE TACTICS OF THE JANUARY UNSC DEBATE, AND LET IT BE KNOWN TO THE PRESS THAT HE WAS RESERVING THE BROADER NEGOTIATING ISSUES FOR HIS OWN VISIT. ALLON'S HANDLING OF MEXICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS ALSO EXPOSED HIM TO CONSIDERABLE DOMESTIC CRITICISM, AND RABASA'S RESIGNATION HAS AGAIN OPENED UP THE QUESTION OF WHETHER MEXICO'S "COMMITMENT" TO REFRAIN FROM SUPPORTING FUTURE THIRD WORLD ATTACKS ON ISRAEL AND ZIONISM IN THE UN WILL HOLD UP.

7. ALLON'S STANDING. IN SUM ALLON REMAINS A LEADER MANQUE, A TEAM PLAYER WHO HAS NEVER QUITE MADE IT TO THE TOP. AS ONE ISRAELI COLUMNIST NOTED JUST TWO WEEKS AGO, THIS HAS BEEN THE PATTERN OF ALLON'S CAREER. GIVEN THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED ON HIM BY RABIN'S DOMINANT ROLE, HIS OWN POLITICAL HISTORY, AND THE CURRENT DISPOSITION OF FORCES IN THE LABOR ALIGNMENT HE IS UNLIKELY TO BE THE PERSON ABLE TO BRING ABOUT MAJOR POLICY SHIFTS, EITHER ON THE PALESTINIAN OR OTHER ISSUES. WHEN THE CABINET DEBATE ON THE PALESTINIANS FINALLY OCCURS, HE WILL PROBABLY URGE HIS COLLEAGUES TO RECONSIDER CURRENT POLICY BUT NOT TO THE POINT OF PRECIPITATING A CRISIS.

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